

Pizza Problems

Some experts question rewarding reading with pizza.

Should kids be reading for pizza? A nationwide reading program is drawing criticism for putting pizza front and center. Since 1985, the restaurant chain Pizza Hut has been running the *Book It* program, which rewards students for reading with personal pan pizzas. Now some people are taking a slice at *Book It*. They say the program promotes poor eating habits and gives Pizza Hut free advertising in public schools.



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Everyone loves pizza, but should it be used as a reward for reading?

"It's clear that Pizza Hut's *Book It* has no place in public schools....It promotes junk food," says Susan Linn, a cofounder of the Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood. The group has called for schools to stop participating in the *Book It* program.

Nearly 22 million children in 50,000 U.S. schools take part in *Book It*. Since the program began, more than 200 million pizzas have been given away. Each year, from October 1 through March 31, students read books to meet monthly reading goals set by teachers. When students meet their goal for the month, they get a certificate for a personal pan pizza.

"We're really proud of the program," says Leslie Tubbs, the director of *Book It*. "We get hundreds of e-mails from [past participants] who praise it and say it helped them get started with reading." In 1988, President Ronald Reagan honored the program for promoting literacy, or reading skills.

But critics say schools can teach students to enjoy reading without the help of a fast-food company. "Schools need to realize that they are undermining their students' well-being," says nutrition expert Jane Levine. She explains that the *Book It* program is a problem not just because it rewards kids with fast food but also because it makes a large company a regular part of the school day.

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. How many U.S. schools take part in the *Book It* program?

- A. 200,000
- B. 50,000
- C. 200 million
- D. 22 million

2. The passage shows two sides of this debate: Should kids be reading for pizza? What is one argument in favor of the pizza reward program?

- A. The program rewards kids with fast food.
- B. The program gives a company free advertising.
- C. The program promotes reading skills.
- D. The program teaches students healthy habits.

3. After reading the passage, what can you conclude about the *Book It* program?

- A. Not everyone agrees that the program is a good idea.
- B. Kids who take part in the program will stop eating pizza.
- C. The program will start rewarding kids with fresh fruit.
- D. More schools will sign up for the program in the future.

4. Read this sentence from the passage:

"They say the program promotes poor eating habits and gives Pizza Hut free advertising in public schools."

In this sentence, the word **promotes** means

- A. quickly considers
- B. strongly agrees with
- C. actively encourages
- D. completely challenges

5. The primary purpose of this passage is to describe

- A. the importance of setting reading goals for children
- B. how pizza can be used to reward students for reading
- C. both sides of a debate about the *Book It* program
- D. why students need to learn healthy eating habits

6. Which president honored the reading program for promoting literacy?

7. How might nutrition expert Jane Levine feel if schools stopped participating in the *Book It* program? How do you know?

8. The question below is an incomplete sentence. Choose the word that best completes the sentence.

More than 200 million pizzas have been rewarded to students _____ the program began.

- A. since
- B. finally
- C. before
- D. about